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# From Archaeology to Interpretation at Charles Towne

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## Chapter 8

### FROM ARCHAEOLOGY TO INTERPRETATION AT CHARLES TOWNE

Stanley South

#### INTRODUCTION

In a volume dedicated to Bob Stephenson, it is appropriate that my chapter focus on the work at Charles Towne Landing since it was at that site in 1968 that I began my relationship with him. It is also appropriate that a statement on Charles Towne be presented here because that site has had a seminal influence on all my work to follow, with 13 articles, monographs, and books resulting from the nine months of fieldwork I carried out on the site in 1969 (South 1969a, 1969b, 1969c, 1970a, 1970b, 1971a, 1972a, 1972b, 1974a, 1974b, 1977) and two articles by Bob Stephenson (1969, 1970). This does not include the articles dealing with the prehistoric components—baked clay objects, Indian pottery taxonomy for the South Carolina coast, and the Charles Towne moundless ceremonial center (South 1970c, 1973, 1974a). Much remains to be published in this area on the Charles Towne site, and hopefully in the near future a monograph on the prehistoric Indian occupation will be published in the *Anthropological Studies* series of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology.

It might well be argued that with so much in print already on the Charles Towne expedition, which was sponsored by the Tricentennial Commission, that another article on the work carried out there would not be necessary. It is ironic that, in spite of the publication of so many articles, chapters, etc., based on work at Charles Towne, Bob and I felt more needed to be published due to the time depth the site offered, from the Archaic period with a variety of baked clay objects, through a moundless ceremonial center of the Mississippian period, to a post-ceremonial center occupation that I have called the Ashley Series in the York Ware Group (South 1973). Unfortunately, funds have never been available for publication of the technical report on the prehistoric Indian components at Charles Towne and it is for this reason results have been published as articles or chapters over the past 15 years in a piecemeal fashion, though that is not to imply the results have not been useful. The publication record on the site speaks for itself.

What I plan to do in this short essay is to present

primarily a visual documentation of the process we went through at Charles Towne in translating the 1670-1680 period archaeological features into the interpretive defensive ditches, embankments, embrasures, and palisades that visitors to the site have been seeing and wondering about for the past 15 years. This process of historic site development continues to be carried out on historic sites from archaeology to interpretive exhibit as more such sites are explored and interpreted to the public. Perhaps a summary of what we did at Charles Towne with the 17th-century fortification features and a discussion of our justification may be of use to other archaeologists faced with a similar challenge.

When the English colonists forming the Port Royal Expedition arrived at Charles Towne Landing in 1670 and decided to stay there rather than at their original destination at Port Royal, they had uppermost in their minds the possible danger from the Spaniards in Florida as well as from Indians (Chevis 1897). They were instructed by John Locke to build a small ditch along the land face of their settlement, with a palisade, to protect against Indians, and a much larger one with artillery emplacements was built facing the deep water access to the site by sea. These defensive ditches were located by John Combes and myself in December 1968 (Figures 8.1c and 8.1d). Figure 8a reveals the tip of Albemarle Point where the high ground meets the deep water channel of Oldtown Creek. The west arm of the "V"-shaped fortification ditch can be seen in the woods. As the Spaniards had done 104 years before them in selecting a site for the capital of Spanish Florida at Santa Elena in Port Royal Sound, the settlement was placed on a small creek landing from the main river to the first point of high ground, as a defensive location against attack from the sea.

In this essay I will be discussing the large "V"-shaped ditch facing the deep water access to the site, the smaller anti-Indian ditch and palisade along the land site of the peninsula, later ditches intruding onto the 17th-century features, and the explanatory interpretations in the form of ditches, embankments, and the palisade.



A



B



C



D



E

Figure 8.1: Archaeological features at Charles Towne.



## VINEYARD DITCHES

Trenching at various locations on the Albemarle Point peninsula revealed a quantity of parallel ditches that have been interpreted as vineyard ditches. Four of these are seen in Figure 8.1c, with the small land face fortification ditch at a right angle in the background. The alignment of the fortification ditch with these vineyard ditches suggests that they are contemporary, and, indeed, 17th-century pipestems, pottery, and other artifacts from the Charles Towne period were found in the vineyard ditches. A series of these is seen crossing the trench in Figure 8.1e. The site was long used for planting vines, from the first settlers, who brought vines in tubs of earth with them, to the 19th-century plantation owner who used arbor-type vineyards seen archaeologically as rectangular postholes with cut nails and other 19th-century artifacts within them. Such ditches have also been found at the Spanish settlement of Santa Elena on Parris Island, where there was a flourishing vineyard in 1568.

## 19TH-CENTURY PLANTATION DITCHES

The alignment of a number of ditches with the ruins of the Horry-Lucas Plantation house on the Charles Towne site places them in that time frame. These ditches intrude onto those dug by the earlier Charles Towne citizens. In Figure 8.1b such a 19th-century ditch is seen to the left as it crosses and intrudes upon the small land face fortification ditch to the right. In Figure 8.1e, a long intrusive 19th-century ditch is seen as it crosses a series of vineyard ditches from the 17th-century Charles Towne occupation.

## THE ANTI-INDIAN LAND FACE FORTIFICATION DITCH

Once the land fortification ditch was located near the neck of the Albemarle Point peninsula (Figure 8.1c), it was followed by removing topsoil from several rectangular areas such as that seen in Figure 8.1b, after which a roadgrader was brought in to remove the plowed soil zone from an area about 20 feet wide (Figures 8.2a, 8.2b, 8.2h). When this was done a gang of crewmen was brought in to gang-schnitt by skimming the loose soil from over the area, thus revealing the dark humus-filled outline of the fortification ditch.

Profiles were left at various places along the ditch to provide a photographic and drawing control as the contents of the ditch were removed and sifted to remove artifacts (Figure 8.2c, 8.2e, 8.3c). During this process, pipestems, pottery fragments, and other artifacts were revealed, such as the pipe bowl in Figure 8.2, found in the fill of area 82 of the ditch. Each 10-foot run

of the ditch was assigned a separate provenience number for artifact location control. By this means a concentration of artifacts was found to be located at the east end of the fortification ditch as it crossed the highest point of the ridge of Albemarle Point. From this we have interpreted a road through the fortified area at that point, where refuse was easily thrown into the fortification ditch.

Near the angle in the fortification ditch seen in Figure 8.2h, a series of postholes was found paralleling the ditch at a distance of five feet from it along the inside. We have interpreted this as the location of the palisade accompanying the ditch, with the embankment from the soil from the ditch being thrown around the palisade posts to stabilize them in the embankment. Such a palisade and small ditch would be a reasonably effective protection against an Indian attack along this land face, an attack that never came.

In revealing the fortification ditch along the land face several features were found, such as that seen in Figure 8.2d, that represented an occupation of the site by Indians prior to the appearance of the English colonists. One such feature, a corn-cob-filled pit, was taken intact from the field to the Institute where it is anticipated it will some day be used in a museum exhibit illustrating such features. When the profiles seen in Figure 8.2c and 8.2e are examined closely as to the formation processes involved in their becoming filled with sand, it can be seen on which side the parapet accompanying the ditch was located. This is seen in the way the lighter subsoil sand washes back into the ditch shortly after it was originally dug. The side from which the lighter sand washed into the ditch is the side on which the loose side of the embankment beside the ditch was located. Profiles of this ditch were literally lifted from the field using a method devised at Charles Towne for doing this (South 1970a). These profiles can then be used to study in detail later or as teaching aids for students to draw profiles without having to go into the field to obtain an archaeological profile.

As the excavation of the east half of the land face ditch was completed, soil was brought back to the area just inside the ditch and shaped by hand into a low embankment paralleling the ditch (Figure 8.2a). This procedure was carried out until the entire 10 acres of the original fortified area was enclosed by the fortification embankment along the land face of the peninsula (Figure 8.2g).

Stabilization of such ditches and embankments can take place naturally, but planting of seed when the soil

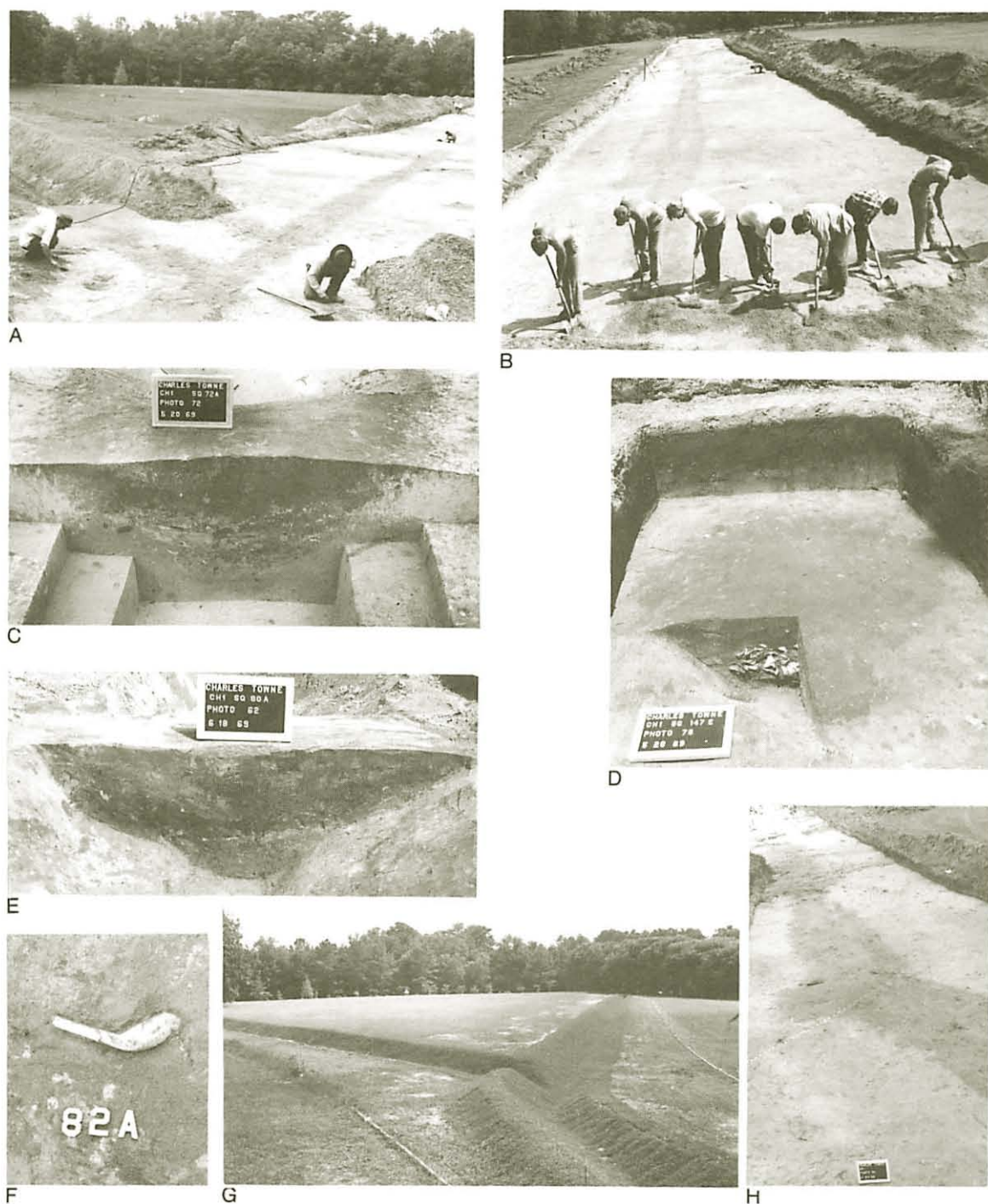


Figure 8.2. Archaeological features at the land face anti-Indian ditch at Charles Towne.





Figure 8.3. Archaeological features at the anti-Spanish ditch at Charles Towne.

is loose, warm and moist will speed up the stabilization process. However, the Tricentennial Commission was in a hurry to stabilize the interpreted fortification ditch and paid for importing truck loads of sod from Florida to place on the ditch and earthworks so that the formal opening of the site would reveal green grass. This required an irrigation system to water the grass to keep the sod from dying (Figure 8.2g).

#### THE PALISADES AND POLITICS

When the extent of the land face fortification ditch was realized, the question of its interpretation to the public arose. A strong feeling was afoot that "those groundmoles should be allowed to do their burrowing thing and then we should backfill the entire site and rebuild Charles Towne on top of the backfilled ditches." It was necessary, therefore, to do some plain and fancy arguing for leaving the ditches open and replacing an embankment of earth beside them complete with palisades in the embankment, as an explanatory exhibit of the fortifications once at Charles Towne.

We had completed excavation of a section of the fortification ditch in the woods and a short distance on each side of the access road to the Albemarle Point site, and to illustrate our point about the embankment, we had placed a low ridge of soil beside the open ditch we had excavated. The Tricentennial Commission was to pay a visit to the site that afternoon, passing down the access road, and then meet with us to decide if we were to be ordered to backfill the ditches or to allow them to stand open and be supplied with \$10,000 worth of palisade posts to be placed in the embankment as a permanent exhibit of the colonist's land face fortification against the Indians.

As I supervised the shaping of the embankment, and the dressing of the area for the visit that afternoon of the dignitaries, it occurred to me that a more powerful point could be made regarding the funding for the palisade posts if we had some palisade posts already in place when the visitors arrived. I had rebuilt a palisaded French and Indian War period fort around Bethabara, North Carolina, in the original fort ditch, and a section of the Civil War palisade at Fort Fisher, North Carolina, so I was familiar with the logistics involved in such explanatory exhibits for interpretation of such a fort to the public. With only a few hours remaining before the commission arrived with the governor to tour the site, I ordered some of my crew (54 men were on the crew at that time) to begin cutting down some of the already dead pine trees on the site, killed by pine borers, trimming off the limbs, and with axes sharpen-

ing the ends into points. We then quickly set 30 or more feet on each side of the roadway at the point where the fortification ditch crossed it, giving a feeling that one was entering a gate of a palisaded fort as you walked down the access road.

The bark was still on the posts and the crew was still placing palisades into position as the Commissioners walked through the quickly erected palisade wall to visit the anti-Spanish excavation underway on the tip of Albemarle Point. The political statement by way of palisades paid off and that afternoon we received our \$10,000 for the palisades and those arguing for backfilling of all our archaeological features lost their fight for a smoothly landscaped site on which a "rebuilt Charles Towne" was to stand, devoid of the distraction of ditches and palisades where the colonists once had them.

Fate stepped in, however, in the form of a summer storm and prevented us from being able to place palisade posts around the entire land face fortification embankment. We were able to run a palisade from the Ashley River marsh through the woods to a point just beyond where our quick palisade had been erected but later removed to make way for the treated posts designed to last a quarter-century or more (Figure 8.4h). What we did with the remainder of the funding for the palisades, after we had to cancel a large order for the posts, I will discuss in the next section. The point I am making here, however, is that sometimes archaeologists involved in translating archaeological features into interpretive exhibits must become involved in the political process in order to achieve their goals of historic preservation and interpretation. To do this they may well need to make a political statement in the form of a jury-rigged palisade when the occasion calls for it!

#### THE ANTI-SPANISH FORTIFICATION DITCH ON ALBEMARLE POINT

When John Combes and I ran a 10-foot wide ditch down the center of Albemarle Point in order to try to intercept 17th-century archaeological features, we crossed a ditch shaped in the form of an open "V" with the ends extending from one side of Albemarle Point to the other (Figure 8.3a). Through slot trenching we were able to delineate the edges and the extent of this ditch which was about 13 to 15 feet wide at the surface, about five feet wide at the bottom, and six feet deep (Figures 8.1d, 8.3b, 8.3d).

When our slot trenching revealed the extent of the ditch we were dealing with, we then brought a backhoe





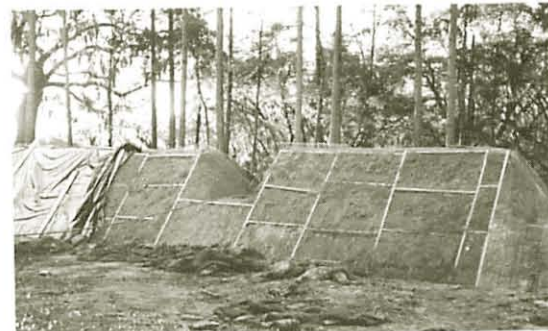
A



B



C



D



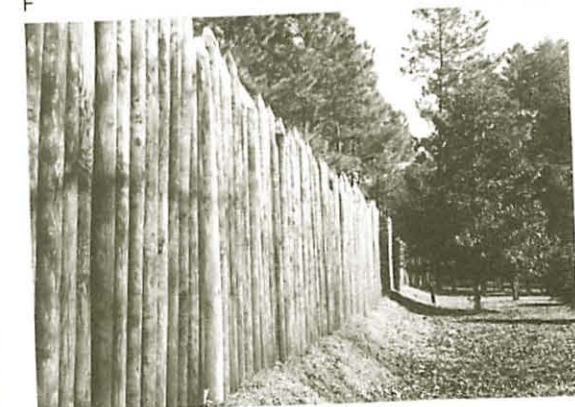
E



F



G



H

Figure 8.4. Interpretive exhibit embankments, ditches, and palisade at Charles Towne.



to the site to remove the trees directly over the ditch and for some distance on each side. We then machine stripped the area to the depth of the bottom of the plowed soil, and with the archaeological crew divided into gang-schnitt squads, we skimmed the surface of the soil to reveal the 17th-century ditch and associated features (Figure 8.3a).

The profiles of the ditch revealed that it was allowed to fill up gradually, with alternate periods from summer rains (represented by yellow sand lenses washed into the ditch) and periods of stabilization when humus buildup from leaves and plant growth produced lenses with high humus content. This alternately light and dark type profile is typical of those features allowed to fill gradually through time (Figures 8.3b, 8.3d, 8.3f). In the uppermost humus layer A, in square 168, a number of pipestems, a bowl of a tobacco pipe, wrought nails, musketballs, and shot were found (Figure 8.3g). In general, however, very few artifacts were recovered from this major fortification ditch. The major ceramic pieces were the neck of a Bellarmine jug (Figure 8.3b) lying on the bottom (Layer E) of the ditch in Square 177, and fragments of an Italian costrel of marbled yellow slipware.

#### THE HESSIAN REDOUBT

In front of the large fortification ditch a fan-shaped moat around a similarly shaped smaller ditch revealed the location of a military redoubt with an inner wall and a central posthole to support heavy weight overhead. Beside the post was a heavily burned hearth area. The shape of the redoubt suggests a trail carriage gun was placed over a room 20 feet across, with walls of palisades against which earth from the ditch around it was thrown. The fact that this feature aligned at a 90° angle with the line of the anti-Spanish fortification ditch suggested that they were contemporary, and for a while we thought that they were part of the same Charles Towne fortification. However, as we analyzed the artifacts from the moat, we found that they dated from the period of the Revolutionary War, whereas no artifacts from that period were found in the large moat ditch from the Charles Towne fort adjacent to it. It appears then, that a Revolutionary War fort was placed on Albemarle Point in a position to repel an enemy attack in a similar manner to the original Charles Towne fort. The relationship of the redoubt to the Charles Towne ditch is seen in Figure 8.3e. As more research on the Revolutionary War period was done, it was found that a Hessian redoubt was built under British supervision on what was then Linning's Creek on Albemarle Point and a circular redoubt was shown

there on a map in Tarleton's account of the Revolutionary War.

#### FROM FEATURES TO EXPLANATORY EXHIBIT

As mentioned previously, before the fortification ditch was revealed, plans had been made by some imaginative souls to put a fiberglass town on the tip of Albemarle Point and the ditch interfered with this. If the ditch were to be left open as an explanatory exhibit with accompanying embankment of earth, the plans for the pseudo-Charles Towne would have to be abandoned. This idea did not die easily, and those in favor of the Hollywood-style town store-front interpretation urged strongly that the ditches dug by the colonists be backfilled so that the imaginative town could be constructed. We, on the other hand, strongly argued against such an interpretation to the public and for placing an embankment beside the open ditch as had once been the case when the Charles Towne colonists dug it as a defense against the Spaniards in Spanish Florida who might come and attack the settlement. Their fears were valid ones, for a spy was indeed sent to Charles Towne to report on the guns and fortifications, who said there were 12 guns pointed toward the deep water channel and others behind the small embankment along the land face ditch and palisade.

As those visitors who have visited the Charles Towne site during the past 15 years have observed, we demonstrated the wisdom of our case and the fort ditches with embankments and embrasures is a major interpretive feature on Albemarle Point, along with the Revolutionary War Hessian redoubt. Before I describe what we did to transform the archaeological feature to 17th-century ditch and 18th-century redoubt into an explanatory exhibit we should examine the model used to achieve that goal and discuss some of the problems and philosophy involved in such an undertaking.

In 1950, J. C. Harrington (1962) reconstructed the scone built by colonists in the late 16th century at Ralph Lane's "new Fort in Virginia" (Harrington 1962: 24). Harrington's reconstruction of this fort is an excellent model for the works found at Charles Towne and was the inspiration and model used for the interpretive exhibit at the Charles Towne site. Harrington said, "Upon completion of excavations in which a structure is involved, one of an archaeologist's obligations is to provide an interpretation of what the original structure looked like" (1962: 24). This chapter deals with this responsibility as it was fulfilled at the Charles Towne site.

If we take Harrington's admonition literally providing an interpretation "of what the original structure looked like," then we are often hard put when it comes to details. We can, however, provide an "impression" of what the structure looked like, or perhaps an exhibit that will provide a "feeling" for what the structure looked like in its *general* form. I have shown how it was not easy to even obtain permission to provide a general interpretive exhibit at Charles Towne, and this is often the case. The reason for this is that there are those who tend to confuse a *general* interpretation with a *literal* one. They may well argue against a *general interpretive exhibit* using objections that the *specific details* are not known. The archaeologist would likely be the first to agree that we do not know the *details* but given a fortification ditch a certain level of explanation can be provided at a *general interpretive level* that will aid the visitor at the site to better understand the major features present in the past. To make the judgement as to the level of generality most appropriate given the scientific and documented record in relation to the archaeological record and the realities of cost requires imagination and courage.

When we proposed the embankment and ditch interpretation to mark the location of the fortifications once at Charles Towne, we were immediately faced with the suggestion that we rebuild the gun platforms and install fiberglass artillery pieces! Then, we were told, guides explaining the fiberglass exhibit could be dressed in "authentic" 17th-century dress to explain the fiberglass things to the visiting public. This was a good example of wanting to "go all the way" rather than stopping a field exhibit of this type at an appropriately general level. Specifics can always be shown in drawings, dioramas, and paintings accompanying the field exhibit.

Our decision at Charles Towne was to leave the original ditch open. However, the original had almost vertical sides that were stabilized originally by a facing of sod by the colonists. We could not expect our ditch to retain the vertical sides without constant maintenance or a sod block wall, so we faced a problem. Our overall goal was to provide a ditch with an embankment that would not rapidly wash into the ditch, but would appear, after several years of settling, to resemble the fortification as it may have looked some years after being abandoned by the colonists. This interpretation would provide a general impression of the fort without the necessity of providing the sodded ditch walls, the faggots, the careful contouring of the original ramparts, parapet, and embrasures, wood-

work, facines, and other myriad details necessary when a literal interpretation "of what the structure looked like" is used. Therefore, given this philosophy, we felt justified in going ahead and sloping the walls of the ditch, and in so doing we compromised the original vertical walls. Given our goal, however, of presenting the ditch as it may have appeared after it had eroded and stabilized after a few years, our decision was appropriate.

Another decision that had to be made was in regard to the Revolutionary War redoubt found immediately in front of the 17th-century fort. Would this redoubt be confused with a part of the original Charles Towne fortifications, as indeed it had been before the analysis of the artifacts from the redoubt ditch was undertaken? Should we not simply backfill the redoubt ditch and remove the possibility of confusion and keep the exhibit "frozen" at the 17th-century time frame? If so, what about the 18th-century plantation house ruin found on the site, should it not also be backfilled "to avoid confusion?" Our view is that evolution does not take place on a synchronic level, but rather, through time, and the exhibit of changing form through time, changing land use, or similar land use, are all interesting aspects of the history of an historic site. Given this theoretical-philosophical approach then, we recommended that both the 17th-century fortification ditches and the Revolutionary War redoubt should be presented as exhibits. The explanation of their different time frames and similar function was expected to be carried out through museum exhibits, on-site exhibits, and interpretive signs, but this has never been effectively carried out as yet.

One of the basic issues in historic site interpretation and preservation is that of chronology and whether or not to use a magic "cut off date" for fixing the site in time as a fossil rather than interpreting it as part of a living, changing cultural process of which it was a part. When I discovered the 18th-century ruins of Bethabara, North Carolina, there was a fine 1820s period brick structure remaining on the site that would have made a fine orientation building to the earlier fortified town ruins left open as field exhibits. However, this is one that we lost. Even though we brought all our developmental philosophy to bear on those in charge, the house was torn down to keep the field exhibits "pure" to the 18th-century period. Archaeologists must learn that they will win some and lose some, but my concern is that they at least understand what issues are involved and that by leaving archaeologically excavated ditches open with accompanying embankments, and by plac-



ing palisades in original palisade postholes and trenches, they are making a strong interpretive statement based on theoretical and philosophical concepts of historic site development.

Some argument might be made for not placing palisade posts in archaeologically revealed trenches because details of support, loopholes for firing, height, size of posts, etc. are not specifically known. Again, when it is known that palisades were used, an excellent interpretive statement can be made by placing posts again in the trench. The height can often be determined from specific documentation for the site, but if not, general references for palisades "of the period" can be used. I have found that eight feet is a frequently seen height for a palisade wall of the 18th century.

At Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site in North Carolina, Joffre L. Coe rebuilt the palisade around the temple mound some 40 years ago using Juniper posts imported from the coastal region for the palisade because they were available at no cost there. His concern was rightfully not so much with matching the detail of pine wood from the postholes with reconstructed pine posts but, rather, with the *general impression* of a palisaded compound around the temple mound. Another example is the fact that the palisade reconstructed was the smaller, earlier one, long gone before the temple mound reached the reconstructed height on which I built the temple. Thus, these *specific elements* were not in existence at the same moment in time, but this is not of concern when your *philosophical goal* is not with nit-picky details, but with the *general interpretive statement* that temple mound ceremonial centers were enclosed by protective palisades.

Similarly, the palisade posts used in the position of the original palisade at Charles Towne along the land face of the fortified area are much larger than the palisade the colonists originally had, as revealed by the bottoms of the postholes revealed by archaeology. Such palisades must be pressure treated to last any amount of time in the earth. However, when you order small palisades, which I have done each time I have built a palisade in archaeological trenches, the suppliers of such posts insist that they cannot and will not furnish posts as small as those I have specified since to do so gets into a size of post that will not last in the earth, even when pressure treated. Thus we must yield to the pressures of the processes in our own cultural system.

The palisade, after all, is to provide a *general impression* of a fortified area, *not a specifically docu-*

*mented exact replica* of all facets of the original. Our research seldom provides such details. If they do happen to be available, however, then common sense dictates that they may well be used in such a case. When the decision was being made as to whether to use palisades in the original fort ditch at Bethabara, North Carolina, a French and Indian War period fort, it was argued by some that instead of a palisade of wooden posts, a *low brick wall* over the palisade ditch would be more appropriate as an interpretive exhibit! Can you imagine the impression the casual visitor to the site would have carried away from such a brick exhibit meant to "symbolize" the location of a *wooden palisade wall*? This is a good example of the need to join the documentary and scientific data from research and archaeology with good common sense and a philosophy oriented toward a generalized view of such past fortification features. Fortunately we won that one, and today visitors to the site get a general impression of a fortified 18th-century settlement.

After that palisade was placed in the original archaeologically revealed ditch it was discovered that a map drawn from the hill above the town in the 18th century had been found in East Germany that showed the palisade as it stood in 1758! We wondered how close our reconstructed palisade would be to the drawing. Fortunately, we were safe; with the drawing of the palisade showing it much as we had rebuilt it.

Through the years the philosophy discussed here has been behind a number of interpretive field exhibits on historic sites, from Bethabara, to Ninety-Six, South Carolina, to Fort Fisher, North Carolina, to Camden, South Carolina, and at Fort San Felipe (1572-1577) at the Spanish colonial capital city of Santa Elena, on Parris Island, South Carolina. Perhaps the earliest interpretive use of a fort ditch with accompanying parapet as a generalized statement and exhibit was carried out at Fort San Marcos at Santa Elena, the Spanish fort dating from 1577 and 1587, which was excavated and interpreted by Major George H. Osterhout, Jr., in 1923!, an exhibit still being enjoyed and visited by those interested in learning through historic site development.

The philosophy I have discussed here has recently been used by architects at Historic Halifax State Historic Site in North Carolina to house the archaeological ruin of the Montford House. The Montford Interpretive Structure contains exhibits about archaeology and protects the excavated site where Joseph Montfort's house once stood. The impressive thing about this is the

fact that the house over the ruin has been designed to give the *general appearance* of an 18th-century structure, with the chimneys being air conditioner cooling towers, the siding being modern, etc., but with the *general appearance* and *spatial mass* being suggestive of a house of the period of historic Halifax. A suggested alternative to this approach had been a Quonset hut over the ruin!, almost as good as the brick wall over a palisade ditch idea. From a distance in the town the building covering the ruin appears in keeping with other surviving structures. Up close it is obvious that it is not a reconstruction. This type of interpretive exhibit is admirable in that it falls neatly within that sensitive artistic twilight zone I have been discussing, between the exacting hard science, hard detail reconstruction and the uncontrolled, unthought-out suggestions such as brick walls representing palisades, Quonset huts over archaeological ruins within an historic house milieu, or fiberglass building "fronts" a-la-Hollywood sets, as an exhibit for the fortified area of 17th-century Charles Towne.

With the discussion of philosophy behind us we can turn to the details and problems encountered in shaping the ditches and earthen embankments at Charles Towne into an interpretive exhibit. We knew from the documents that 12 guns faced the deep water channel from behind the earthen embankment. At first I felt that since we did not know where these 12 were located it would be better to go with an embankment having no embrasure openings. However, Harold Peterson, our consultant at the time, pointed out that this would be a greater error than simply placing 12 embrasures more or less equally distributed along the defensive ditch, which is what we did.

The sides of the ditches were sloped slightly, and an embankment approximately the size of the ditch contents was positioned beside the ditch using front-loading earth-moving machinery. The archaeological crew was then used to shape the embankment by hand using shovels, feet, tamping poles, etc. (Figure 8.4a). Rolls of grass sod, cut in Florida and quickly transported overnight to the site by truck, were then placed onto the embankment and fastened into place with "U"-shaped wire pins to hold the sod in place until the roots took hold of the embankment and sides of the fort ditch (Figure 8.4b).

This process was completed for the anti-Spanish ditch on a Friday afternoon, and the crew and I were pleased with ourselves. Our only concern was the possible slumping of the embankment in case there was

a hard rain. On Saturday afternoon, a six-inch rain in three hours deluged the site, causing a collapse of the embankment into the ditch, plus erosion in places (Figure 8.4c). No funding for this disaster was available to employ the crew for a longer period of time to repair the damage, so the order, already placed for palisade posts for the entire land face of the fortification was cancelled and the funds diverted to re-working and stabilizing the embankments and ditch (Figure 8.4h). Obviously a better method was needed to hold the embankment in place. Two-by-fours were placed flush with the face of the earthworks and covered with chicken wire (Figure 8.4d).

Sod was then placed over the chicken wire. An irrigation system was installed around the base of the embankment and in the ditch and over the top of the embankments to provide a spray of water to keep the sod damp while it grew roots and became stabilized on the steep slopes of the interpretive exhibit (Figure 8.4e, 8.4f, 8.4g). In the 15 years since this work was done, the embankment and the ditch have settled and the appearance of the exhibit is more rounded and natural looking than it appears in the photographs presented here. The interpretive exhibit has been a successful one in providing a general impression for the visitor to the site of the position, scale, orientation, and shape of the 17th-century fortifications on Albemarle Point, a far better one, we feel, than a fiberglass "village" rebuilt over the backfilled ditch of the fort.

This chapter has been written to emphasize the point that as historic sites are developed at an increasing frequency, archaeologists are faced with some of the same challenges we faced at Charles Towne. It is our hope that some of the lessons learned there will be of help to others along the way.

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